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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2873
INFO RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 0718
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SUBJECT: IDP RETURN PLANS AND SECURITY ISSUES

REF: DILI 404

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: In a conversation with Charge d'Affaires on August 7, Anna Pessoa, the Minister for State Administration, discussed the current state of planning for the return of as many as 150,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) to their homes in Dili. Noting the deteriorated security environment of recent days (see reftel), she emphasized the necessity of adequate security provisions before IDPs would consider returning. The most important single element of this in her opinion is the establishment of 24 hour fixed police posts in all neighborhoods, at least for the initial return period, which she said will require the rapid reintegration of the national police (PNTL) to reach the necessary numbers. Noting that a plan for screening the Dili PNTL was nearing finalization, she argued that the plan must be "concretized" and then implemented expeditiously. Another security concern she discussed is the wide reluctance on the part of the population to reveal the identities of perpetrators, especially leaders, of gang and mob violence. She reported that she is working with the Prosecutor General to make arrangements to ensure witness confidentiality and safety. On a separate issue, Pessoa reported that she will this week ask the Council of Ministers (cabinet) to renew the mandate of the commission to investigate the complaints of the nearly 600 soldiers dismissed from the armed forces in March. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Charge d'Affaires Whitman met with Minister for State Administration Anna Pessoa on August 7. Pessoa has been a close ally of former Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri and remains a central player in the ruling Fretilin party. Pessoa began by expressing her concern regarding the recent spike of gang violence in Dili. In her opinion, the events of the last few days "have not been spontaneous, have not been unorganized." She was also critical of the international police response, noting that they were "moving too slowly" and that she understood the need for them to have an initial start up period,

but that time is past and they "should now be able to guarantee internal security."

13. (U) Minister Pessoa outlined the plan that she envisions for the return of IDPs to their communities. She said that this plan is her ministry's proposal, but that she is coordinating with both the Ministry of Labor and Social Reinsertion and the Ministry of Public Works and it will be discussed by the inter-ministerial working group on IDP return. She believes there is a general consensus on the broad outlines of the plan, but many specifics to be worked out. The plan described by Pessoa included the following sequential steps: 1) Discussions with the communities to which IDPs are to return, at the village and sub-village level, to prepare them for the return of former residents and to address concerns; 2) discussions with IDPs in the camps to ready them for return; 3) establishment of 24-hour police posts in communities to which IDPs are to return; 4) community meetings between IDPs and the community to which they are to return; 5) IDPs given three months supply of basic supplies when they depart the camps permanently. She noted that this basic plan does not yet address all the issues as there are multiple cases where people's houses have been burned or where others are illegally occupying their houses which will have to be addressed through legal processes.

14. (U) Pessoa emphasized that the lynchpin of any IDP return plan will be security. Reporting that she had been talking to IDPs and to the elected village chiefs in the communities all of whom had told her, "Our people will not be willing to go back unless there is 24-hour police presence in their community." She does not see this as a permanent need, but an arrangement to be in place for the first few weeks as communities reintegrate.

15. (SBU) In order to meet the goal of 24-hour police presence in the communities, Pessoa stressed that reintegration of the PNTL into Dili policing must occur as soon as possible in order to have the numbers required for this. Therefore, the screening of the PNTL must start immediately. She commented on the plan for

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police screening and reintegration presented last week to the Prime Minister, expressing considerable skepticism about its practicability. The overall plan was good she said, but it lacked details regarding the timetable and specific steps involved. Moreover, she implied that it lacked the inclusion of input from the communities regarding individual police who they may regard as unacceptable. She also discussed the over 200 new PNTL officers who graduated from the academy in June. While agreeing that they too should undergo some kind of screening she believes that it can be less rigorous than for the PNTL who were active during the lead up to the crisis. These new graduates, she said, should be screened and brought on board within no more than two weeks.

16. (U) Pessoa also discussed the problem of impunity for many of the perpetrators of gang violence because community members and IDP camp residents are too afraid to identify them. Justice for perpetrators will be a key element of the security needed for IDP return, but will be impossible if people remain too terrified to reveal needed information. She reported that she has been discussing the issue with the Prosecutor General with the goal of improving arrangements to ensure witness confidentiality and safety. She noted that most of the crimes

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being committed are public crimes and should be pursued on that basis, without requiring the involvement of the victim. She is pushing for an arrangement whereby the elected village chiefs could serve as a channel for information to the Prosecutor's office.

17. (U) On a separate issue, Pessoa relayed that the commission to address the complaints of the 595 soldier (known as the "petitioners") dismissed from the armed forces (F-FDTL) in March after they went on strike to protest alleged discrimination has yet to restart its work. Pessoa was to lead the commission, but

its work was soon truncated by the refusal of the "petitioners" to cooperate and the deterioration of the security situation in May. According to Pessoa, the three-month mandate of the original commission has run out and it will therefore require a new mandate from the Government. She plans to raise the issue at this week's Council of Ministers meeting to request a new mandate. She remarked that it will need the clear support of the Prime Minister accompanied by assurances that they can work without interference.

WHITMAN